

Application No. 09/634,185

Filed: August 9, 2000

TC Art Unit: 2643

Confirmation No.: 5742

CLAIMS

1. (Cancelled)
2. (Currently Amended) A communications outlet according to claim ~~1~~15, wherein the housing is attachable to a wall.
3. (Original) A communications outlet according to claim 2, wherein the housing is attachable to a wall in a permanent manner.
- a' 4. (Original) A communications outlet according to claim 3, wherein the housing is configured to be disposed in an opening of a wall and secured to the wall at the edges of the opening.
5. (Original) A communications outlet according to claim 4, further comprising connectors for connecting the premises interface circuitry to wiring within the wall in a splice fashion.
6. (Original) A communications outlet according to claim 2, wherein the housing is attachable to a wall in a removable manner.

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7. (Original) A communications outlet according to claim 6, wherein the housing includes a plug for insertion into a modular telephone jack.

8. (Cancelled)

9. (Currently Amended) A communications outlet according to claim 8, wherein at least one of the wired connections conforms to a carrier sense multiple access communications protocol.

10. (Currently Amended) A communications outlet according to claim 8, wherein at least one of the wireless connections conforms to a master-slave communications protocol.

11. (Currently Amended) A communications outlet ~~according to claim 8,~~ comprising:

a housing configured for placement in an operating area of a user;

user interface circuitry associated with the housing and for communicating with user equipment including a user telephone device and a user data device, the user interface circuitry including a link-layer data interface to the user data device;

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premises interface circuitry associated with the housing and for communicating with premises equipment located generally outside the user operating area, the premises equipment including data processing equipment and telephone communications equipment providing access to a public telephone network, the interface to the premises equipment include wired and wireless connections; and bridge circuitry associated with the housing and for establishing communications connections between the user interface circuitry and the premises interface circuitry, wherein the bridge circuitry is being further operative to automatically use one of the wireless connections to communicate with the premises equipment if the obtainable data rate is greater than the data rate that can be obtained by a one of the wired connections to the premises equipment.

12. (Currently Amended) A communications outlet according to claim 15, wherein the premises interface circuitry includes an interface to a private branch exchange.

13. (Currently Amended) A communications outlet according to claim 15, wherein the user telephone interface is an analog telephone interface.

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14. (Currently Amended) A communications outlet according to claim ~~1~~15, wherein the user telephone interface is a digital telephone interface.

15. (Currently Amended) A communications outlet ~~according to claim 1~~, ~~further comprising:~~

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a housing configured for placement in an operating area of a user;

user interface circuitry associated with the housing and for communicating with user equipment including a user telephone device and a user data device, the user interface circuitry including a link-layer data interface to the user data device;

premises interface circuitry associated with the housing and for communicating with premises equipment located generally outside the user operating area, the premises equipment including data processing equipment and telephone communications equipment providing access to a public telephone network, the interface to the premises equipment include wired and wireless connections; and

bridge circuitry associated with the housing and for establishing communications connections between the user interface circuitry and the premises interface circuitry; and

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____ a processor operative to provide high-level services to the user via the user data interface.

16. (Original) A communications outlet according to claim 15, wherein the high-level services include data encryption.

17. (Original) A communications outlet according to claim 15, wherein the high-level services include user authentication.

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18. (Original) A communications outlet according to claim 15, wherein the high-level services include diagnostics and status reporting to the user.

19. (Currently Amended) A communications outlet according to claim ~~15~~18, wherein the diagnostics are operative to detect problems with a connection to the user, and wherein the status reporting is operative to notify the user of the detected connection problems.

20. (Currently Amended) A communications outlet according to claim ~~15~~15, further comprising power circuitry operative to receive DC power from one of the interfaces.

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21. (New) A communications outlet according to claim 15, wherein the high-level services include Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) services.

22. (New) A communications outlet, comprising:

a housing configured for placement in an operating area of a user;

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user interface circuitry associated with the housing and for communicating with user equipment including a user telephone device and a user data device, the user interface circuitry including a link-layer data interface to the user data device;

premises interface circuitry associated with the housing and for communicating with premises equipment located generally outside the user operating area, the premises equipment including data processing equipment and telephone communications equipment providing access to a public telephone network, the interface to the premises equipment include wired and wireless connections; and

bridge circuitry associated with the housing and for establishing communications connections between the user interface circuitry and the premises interface circuitry, the bridge circuitry being further operative to automatically use one of the

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wireless connections to communicate with the user if the wired connection to the user is faulty.

23. (New) A communications outlet according to claim 15, wherein the user interface circuitry, premises interface circuitry, and bridge circuitry are arranged on standard circuit cards disposed in the housing.

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24. (New) A communications outlet according to claim 23, wherein the standard circuit cards are Personal Computer Memory Card International Association (PCMCIA) circuit cards.

25. (New) A method of connecting user equipment generally within a user operating area to premises equipment generally outside the user operating area, the user equipment including a user telephone device and a user data device, the premises equipment including data processing equipment and telephone communications equipment providing access to a public telephone network, comprising:

providing a user interface to the user equipment, the user interface including an interface to the user telephone device and a link-layer data interface to the user data device;

providing a premises interface to the premises equipment; and

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via circuitry coupled between the user interface and the premises interface, (1) establishing communications connections between the user interface and the premises interface, and (2) providing high-level services to the user via the user data interface.

26. (New) A method according to claim 25, wherein the high-level services include data encryption.

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Cont 27. (New) A method according to claim 25, wherein the high-level services include user authentication.

28. (New) A method according to claim 25, wherein the high-level services include diagnostics and status reporting to the user.

29. (New) A method according to claim 28, wherein the diagnostics are operative to detect problems with a connection to the user, and wherein the status reporting is operative to notify the user of the detected connection problems.

30. (New) A method according to claim 25, wherein the high-level services include Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) services.

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31. (New) A method of connecting user equipment generally within a user operating area to premises equipment generally outside the user operating area, the user equipment including a user telephone device and a user data device, the premises equipment including data processing equipment and telephone communications equipment providing access to a public telephone network, comprising:

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providing a user interface to the user equipment, the user interface including an interface to the user telephone device and a link-layer data interface to the user data device;

providing a premises interface to the premises equipment, the premises interface including both wired and wireless connections; and

via circuitry coupled between the user interface and the premises interface, (1) establishing communications connections between the user interface and the premises interface, one of the wireless connections of the premises interface being automatically used to communicate with the premises equipment if the obtainable data rate is greater than the data rate that can be obtained by one of the wired connections to the premises equipment, and (2) providing high-level services to the user via the user data interface.

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32. (New) A method of connecting user equipment generally within a user operating area to premises equipment generally outside the user operating area, the user equipment including a user telephone device and a user data device, the premises equipment including data processing equipment and telephone communications equipment providing access to a public telephone network, comprising:

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providing a user interface to the user equipment, the user interface including an interface to the user telephone device and a link-layer data interface to the user data device, the user interface including both wired and wireless connections;

providing a premises interface to the premises equipment; and

via circuitry coupled between the user interface and the premises interface, (1) establishing communications connections between the user interface and the premises interface, one of the wireless connections of the user interface being automatically used to communicate with the user if the wired connection to the user is faulty, and (2) providing high-level services to the user via the user data interface.

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